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191117Z Aug 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 005139

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO
E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio and leading Israeli news web sites reported that this morning, at the same time as a Katyusha rocket landed in Aqaba's harbor, next a facility used by a U.S. military ship, another rocket landed next to Eilat Airport. There were no casualties in Israel. The media quoted the police as saying that the rockets were probably fired from Jordanian territory. Israel Radio reported that the security forces of Israel are cooperating, and that one person was killed on the Jordanian side. Ha'aretz's web site quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying that the Eilat attack appeared to be intentional. The web site quoted a security official as saying it was not clear whether Eilat or two U.S. Navy vessels anchoring in Jordan were the true target of the rocket attack.

Israel Radio quoted a White House spokeswoman as saying that President Bush expressed confidence in PM Sharon's ability to complete the disengagement, and that he understands the pain of the people who had to leave their houses. The spokeswoman reportedly mentioned the President's belief that the disengagement will make Israel stronger; she was quoted as saying that it will bolster the U.S.-Israel connection. Leading media reported that the American media extensively reported on the disengagement. Israel Radio notes that, contrary to the Israeli media, they did not show empathy for the evacuated settlers. The media note that European media seem more interested in the Palestinians' fate than in the disengagement.

All media reported that on Thursday, the IDF completed the evacuation of Neve Dekalim and Kfar Darom, the two settlements with the highest number of disengagement opponents. Many police officers were injured in the clashes. The final stage of withdrawing the two settlements came down to evacuating their synagogues, which took several hours. In Kfar Darom, dozens of youngsters barricaded themselves on the synagogue rooftop, and assaulted soldiers and police officers. Many police officers were injured in the clashes. Leading media quoted Sharon as saying that the disturbance at Kfar Darom was "criminal." At Neve Dekalim, nearly 1,000 people who had barricaded themselves in the synagogue emerged after lengthy talks with the security forces. The media note that 16 of the 21 Gaza Strip settlements were evacuated. Hatzofe's banner compares the evacuation with the destruction of the two Temples. This morning, the electronic media are reporting that the security forces are continuing the operation -- at first in the settlement of Gadid, where they are facing some resistance. Israel Radio reported that the cabinet will vote Sunday on the evacuation of northern West Bank settlements.

Jerusalem Post quoted FM Silvan Shalom as saying in an interview held with the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Rai Al-Aam on Wednesday that Gaza would serve as a "model," and that if the PA dismantled the terrorist infrastructure and "peace and quiet reign in the region, we will be able to move forward and return to the road map." Shalom warned that Israel would not "take a new risk" if the Palestinians resume their attacks from Gaza and that Israel was now expecting Palestinian "actions," not excuses.

Israel Radio reported that there still is no arrangement with Egypt regarding the transfer of rubble from settlers' houses slated for demolition. The station says that The Palestinians have made the transfer of the rubble to Sinai conditional on the attainment of an agreement regarding the operation of the border crossing in Rafah. Israel Radio reported that officials in Jerusalem have decided that if an agreement is not reached in the coming days, Israel will leave the building debris in place.

Yediot reported that Agriculture Minister Yisrael Katz (Likud) demanded on Thursday that Sharon convene an urgent cabinet debate about Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's remarks to The New York Times this week regarding the continuation of the peace process. Katz was quoted as saying: "Rice's declaration proves that there is no basis for the Prime Minister's statement that there will be no further disengagement."

Ha'aretz, Yediot, and Jerusalem Post cited The New York Times as saying Thursday that David Satterfield, a former State Department official who is deputy to the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, is mentioned -- but not by name -- in the indictment against former AIPAC official Steve Rosen as one of the senior U.S. officials who discussed classified material with the defendant. Yediot's headline reads: "Another Israeli 'Mole' in U.S. Administration."

Ha'aretz reported that on Thursday, a group of Israeli youths vandalized the gas station at the entrance of the northern West Bank settlement of Sa-Nur. The station is owned by a native of the adjacent village of Jebaa who is a Canadian citizen. This morning, Israel Radio reported that Sa-Nur expelled two young extremist outsiders seen as responsible for the criminal act.

A Yediot/Mina Zemach (Dahaf Institute) poll:
-59 percent of Israelis support the disengagement: 37 percent are opposed; 4 percent are undecided.
-"How would you grade the police and IDF's performance during the evacuation?" Very good: 62 percent; good: 27 percent; not good: 7 percent; very bad: 4 percent.
-"What is your evaluation of the PM's leadership regarding disengagement?" Very good: 28 percent; good: 33 percent; not good: 14 percent; not good at all: 22 percent; 3 percent are undecided.

Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement:

Summary:

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "[Sharon] wanted to dodge the implementation of the 'road map' and was afraid to deceive George W. Bush. Therefore, he was compelled to offer him an alternative plan."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "There are two faces to the disengagement from the Gaza Strip that, in fact, may be mutually contradictory."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz: "Now it's the Palestinian Authority's turn not to miss an opportunity that has fallen straight into its hands like a gift from heaven.... Only Sharon could evacuate Gaza, and only he can take the next step toward peace. Don't pass him by."

Political parties correspondent Sima Kadmon wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Sharon finds it hard to find a political direction at this time."

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "In [The New York] Times's eyes, the night during which soldiers

gathered to evict settlers was the night of the living dead, when the ghost of Greater Israel returned to haunt the region, a ghost so powerful that its exorcism must be Bush's top peacemaking priority."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "Prime Minister Sharon ... turned a blind eye to the fact that Jews have resided in the Gaza Strip for six centuries."

Block Quotes:

I. "The Plan Wasn't Born of Terror or Corruption"

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (August 19): "The question regarding the reason why Ariel Sharon broke his promise to the Likud voters and adopted the unilateral disengagement plan is significant at this time and charged with meaning for the future.... Disengagement was born in the Prime Minister's entourage. The idea wasn't even new. [Then-Likud cabinet minister] Roni Milo proposed it to Yitzhak Shamir during the 1992 elections. It was rejected and the Likud lost. Amram Mitzna presented it on a smaller scale during the 2003 elections, and lost too. It was later revived [among Sharon advisers]. This was neither because Palestinian terrorism succeeded, nor because Sharon became entangled in a corruption quagmire, but because he wanted to dodge the implementation of the 'road map' and was afraid to deceive George W. Bush. Therefore, he was compelled to offer him an alternative plan."

II. "The Two Faces of Disengagement"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (August 19): "There are two faces to the disengagement from the Gaza Strip that, in fact, may be mutually contradictory. The positive aspect is reflected in Israel's success in shortening the military lines logically and ceding territory that effectively is of no strategic importance to the country.... The negative aspect of the disengagement is reflected, above all, in the uncertainty of who will rule in the Gaza Strip after the evacuation and whether a new round of violence will erupt. This situation is compounded by the fact that the Palestinians feel, and to a large extent justifiably, that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza is their victory.... The Palestinians do not accept the fact that Israel took an important, risk-fraught move via the disengagement and now it's their turn to play their part.... [If terrorist activity is resumed], Sharon and the Israeli government will be unwilling to go ahead with implementing the road map. This will certainly be the case if it turns out that lifting the siege of the Gaza Strip is bringing about large-scale arms smuggling and the entry of international Islamic terrorists. The Palestinians' political aspirations will again be halted and the prospect of another disengagement will vanish."

III. "This Is Just the Beginning"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz (August 19): "Hamas is already boasting that Israel has left Gaza with its tail between its legs. My answer to these guys is that humiliation, if you want to call it that, is better than stupidity. What do they want to do? Bring back terrorism and catapult Israel's fanatics and rebels into power? And an aside for those loudmouths in Hamas: quit the heroics. Nowadays you can't even go out without your masks on for fear of being identified. Now it's the Palestinian Authority's turn not to miss an opportunity that has fallen straight into its hands like a gift from heaven. Tone down the hostile rhetoric, disarm the terror organizations, stop pelting Israel with rockets and mortars, and muster the seriousness and courage to negotiate a settlement with Israel. Only Sharon could evacuate Gaza, and only he can take the next step toward peace. Don't pass him by."

IV. "Alone"

Political parties correspondent Sima Kadmon wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 19): "Sharon finds it hard to find a political direction at this time. Reason makes him turn rightwards; however, he would then lose the camp he has recently acquired -- this being conditional support,

anyway. Sharon has no illusion: that Left/Center camp didn't really discover a new Sharon. He just found temporary partners who would implement his worldview. Should Sharon turn leftwards, he would deepen his preexisting problem, despite the fact that he refuses to recognize its might: his relations with the Left and his cradle -- the Likud."

V. "Lesser Israel, Greater Palestine"

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (August 19): "Greater Israel is dead; long live Greater Israel, said [Ethan Bronner in] The New York Times [Tuesday].... Reading the Times ... one might think there was nothing more alive and menacing than the 'threat' of Greater Israel. After briefly praising Israel for 'finally' taking such an obvious step, the paper frets that 'Sharon seems to think that withdrawing from Gaza will buy Israel time to consolidate in the West Bank'.... In the Times's eyes, the night during which soldiers gathered to evict settlers was the night of the living dead, when the ghost of Greater Israel returned to haunt the region, a ghost so powerful that its exorcism must be Bush's top peacemaking priority. Could we return to earth for a moment, please? Settlements and Greater Israel are no longer the principal obstacle to peace, if they ever were. Another dream is: Greater Palestine.... Even the most moderate Palestinian asserts that Israel in its entirety sits on 'stolen' Palestinian land, and that while Israel must be recognized de facto, a Jewish state has no moral or legal right to exist."

VI. "Sharon Is Putting Out Gush Katif's Candle"
Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (August 19): "Prime Minister Sharon and his cabinet members turned a blind eye to the fact that Jews have resided in the Gaza Strip for six centuries. The Strip is an integral part of the Land of Israel. For some reason, they decided that Gaza wasn't a part of the Land of Israel. Moreover, Sharon also ignored the fact that Kfar Darom was established ... in 1946, before Israel's independence, on land purchased by the Jewish National Fund.... Gush Katif used to exalt Israel; the Sharon government is blowing out that candle."

KURTZER